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U.S. Unveils Defense Center in Rockies Cave

But Better H-Bombs Can Already Knock It Out, Some Experts Say

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COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo., Jan. 26 — The North American Air Defense Command today put on display its new \$142.4-million combat operations center deep inside a 9000-foot mountain near Pike's Peak — a massive complex enclosed in a granite cave and designed to provide the maximum possible protection from nuclear attack.

But even as newsmen toured the center, inside Cheyenne Mountain, it appeared that the Soviet Union's vaunted new 50-to-100 megaton bombs may already have made it vulnerable to nuclear attack and hence possibly obsolete.

Functionally, the aerospace defense center is all that could be hoped for, a self-contained miniature city capable of maintaining 1000 people for more than a month when "buttoned up," and containing the most advanced electronics warning system yet conceived.

When first conceived in 1957, the center was expected to be virtually invulnerable to nuclear attack. Nuclear capability, as projected at that time,

was in the high-kiloton range. But progress in nuclear weapons has been so great since then that a direct hit by a Soviet multi-megaton missile on top of Cheyenne Mountain or near the entrance to the cavern could knock out the defense center.

It was designed for something like a 600,000-million p.s.i. (pounds per square inch) protection, considered all that was needed at that time.

Maj. Gen. Joseph L. Dickman, commander of the new NORAD observation center, conceded that a 100-megaton bomb such as the Soviet Union claims to have built, would destroy the new center if it hit on top or near the portals. But he said he was confident that the center would be reasonably secure because only a direct hit could knock it out.

But other experts here said the designed strength of the mountain center was made to 1957 standards and a direct hit by any multiple-megaton bomb probably would make it inoperable.

Such a bomb would have to hit within a quarter-mile of

the target—a difficult job—in order to do so, they say.

Because of the center's increasing vulnerability officials said they had proposed the creation of a NORAD airborne warning control headquarters maintained constantly aloft in several giant C-5A planes.

They also said they had alternate headquarters on the ground.

However, the new center is far far better protected than the existing command operations center of NORAD. A former NORAD commander in chief said that a man with a bazooka could put the present center, located above ground in this city, out of operation.

The new center has two entrances near the base of Cheyenne Mountain into which trucks can enter. To get into the cavern proper, a quarter of a mile deep inside, one must pass two 30-ton armored doors, one of which is always closed.

Inside the cavern are 11 buildings, eight three stories high and the others two stories high, built of steel.

They are mounted on 937 coil springs made of 3-inch rods, 24 inches in diameter.

Acting with hydraulic shock dampers, they will equalize any blasts or earth tremors.

Once out of the cavern and into the building, one feels a certain sense of normalcy. There are offices with girl typists and workmen are finishing up the interior decorations. When the new headquarters is completed in late April, and full operations are transferred from downtown Colorado Springs, there will be a normal working force of 425 people, with fewer on the late shift.

In an emergency, when the center has to be "buttoned up," nearly 1000 people can

be maintained for at least a month within its confines.

There is a medical dispensary with an operating room, dental office and pharmacy, sleeping quarters and an attractive dining room for 500 people.

Water for the center is provided by the city system and a reservoir inside maintains 1.3 million gallons of drinking and 4.3 million gallons for cooling the extensive power plant's air conditioning and heating units.

There are two emergency exits, in addition to the two portals, from which people could escape in case of danger. One is an air exhaust tunnel and the other is a 3-foot emergency rescue tube.

Gen. Dickman said that to provide adequate facilities for long-duration confinement he has asked for recreational facilities to be added to the ample reserve space in the cavern to provide reading rooms, handball courts, and a steam bath sauna.

In addition to NORAD's air defense headquarters, the cavern city also houses its space defense center, headquarters for the Satellite Warning Systems, the Defense Communication Agency headquarters, and the Civil Defense National Warning Center.

Construction was started in 1961.